

THE VIRASAIVA MOVEMENT

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Basavanna is often found speaking of his failure in language common in religious self-condemnation. He says that like the washerman who is anxious for the clothes of the village, he too was foolish and thought of land and money and failed utterly. Men did not know he was an offender in all the three ways. Much show and emptiness were his. He was a vaunter. No more was he in truth than a servant of the saints who had faith in God. Those who are familiar with religious literature will know how to understand this language of humility and strong self-condemnation. The nearer the devotee gets to his ideal the more the remaining distance between him and his goal pains him; as when waiting for a beloved one the last half hour seems longest. Basavanna's ambition was simple but high. He desired not the height of Brahma nor the position of Vishnu nor Siva, He desired no height but this, that he might know the feet of God's saints. This was the height of ambition for him but from this he felt he was always far. He felt that his egoism persisted and this destroys all the good that devotion may do. When the householder truly understands his position he will feel that the house is God's, that he is His agent and serves Him as a servant may in a palace. But Basavanna felt that his devotion had been like the labour

of the bull
going round the oil mill which had no
seed in it; or
like eating salt after washing it in water
for he felt
a pride that he did good. He was not the
man who
served, nor was he the man who gave, nor
was it he
that begged. Not only could he take no
credit for the
good in his deeds but of that which was
wanting too